

In the Specification

At page 4, beginning at line 20, please replace the paragraph with the following paragraph:

Several embodiments of the present invention to mitigate some or all of the above disadvantages of prior art auto-focus systems and methods.

At page 8, beginning at line 9, please replace the paragraph with the following paragraph:

In this case, the focus optical system is separate from the primary observational optical system which is used to image the object, obtain metrology data or other measured data therefrom, etc., once the focus has been determined. Such primary observational optical system will again comprise a suitable arrangement of optical elements to direct reflected light from the object to an observational imaging means, again preferably comprising a detector array. In the alternative, a single optical system with a common imaging means can be used first to investigate the focus condition and subsequently to conduct observation and/or measurement of the object.

At page 9, beginning at line 22, please replace the paragraph with the following paragraph:

In accordance with a further aspect of the invention ~~a further aspect~~, a microscope auto-focus system is provided for the implementation of the foregoing method, and a microscope is provided equipped with such a system.--